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## **Teachers' and students' amount and purpose of L1 use: English as foreign language (EFL) classrooms in Iran**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A surge of interest in using First Language (L1) in English as Second/Foreign Language (L2/EFL) learning has recently been developed. Despite this upsurge, the concern about using L1 by teachers and students in L2/EFL classrooms is still important for researchers to consider in the field. The focus of this study is to investigate the amount and purposes of L1 use in EFL classrooms by teachers and students in two English language institutes in Iran. Responding to the research questions on the amount and purpose of L1 use, the researchers collected the data for 12 sessions (a 90-minute class) from six male and female EFL teachers aged from 25 to 30 and 155 students 19 to 25 years of age whose pre-intermediate classes were video recorded for two sessions. The findings revealed that the EFL teachers used a limited amount of L1 in the EFL classrooms though they still used it as an aid for a variety of purposes in order to improve their teaching purposes and the students' learning. The findings also indicated that using L1 facilitates students' learning in EFL classrooms, and it should not be excluded from the classroom syllabi or considered an evil in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** L1 use; L2 pedagogy; L2 classroom; classroom syllabi; EFL classroom

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## Introduction

Nowadays, there has been an increasing demand for learning L2/EFL throughout the world as the advancement of the Internet binds approximately all the nations altogether. This ongoing desire impels the researchers and the teachers to find out some helpful methods and techniques for improving L2/EFL learning and teaching processes. So far, too many factors have been found to have serious effects on L2/EFL pedagogy and one of them is using L1 in the L2/EFL classroom syllabi (Lin, 2013). There have always been new ideas and theories regarding the L1 use and issues reported on it. Some of the theories have been supportive, but some contrastive to the use of L1 in L2/EFL classrooms. Researchers believe that L1 use is a facilitating tool in L2 teaching and learning (Cook, 2001) and does not hinder the learning process (Miles, 2004) in the classroom. Aligned with this aspect, Macaro (2001) maintained that teachers decide when and how much L1 should be used to improve the learning process, but it must be taken into consideration that there is always a limitation for L1 inclusion in the L2 classroom syllabi and it must not be overly used because it debilitates learning process and makes the students lazy (Atkinson, 1987). However, researchers against L1 use in the L2 classrooms disagree and believe that students do not work hard enough when they can simply think in L1 (Ford, 2009); therefore, as Chambers (1991), Halliwell and Jones (1991) and McDonald (1993) concluded, L1 use diminishes the process of L2 learning. Furthermore, Critchley (1999), Burden (2000) and Mitchell (1988) argued that L2 learning mostly happens when the students are exposed to it exclusively because it helps them to think and communicate in L2 as if they are in a real life context (Chambers, 1991).

In contrast, L1 must be used in an L2 classroom for special purposes such as facilitating communication (Harbord, 1992), conveying meaning (Cook, 2001), facilitating student-teacher relationship (Harbord, 1992), and scaffolding and peer learning. Therefore, this study has examined the amount and purposes of L1 use among teachers and students in EFL classrooms and provides a thorough-going review of related literature on L1 use in L2/EFL classrooms below.

## Review of Literature

Using L1 in L2/EFL classrooms has always been a controversial issue, and many researchers have examined the effect of L1 use on L2/EFL learning. The use of L1 in L2/EFL classrooms was traditionally thought to be detrimental, interfering and debilitating, and in this regard, some researchers (e.g., McDonald, 1993; Miles, 2004) believe that L1 use diminished the L2/EFL learning process and limited students to use L2 in the classroom. However, other researchers (Phillipson, 1992; Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Van Der Walt, 1997) maintain that the excessive L2 use brings language imperialism and fades away the students' L1 and consequently, their culture. Further, L1 must be considered as a valuable tool in L2/EFL or bilingual English classrooms to preserve alternative cultures and rescue the students from power relationships, which are dominant in language classrooms, as they might not be able to express themselves in the target language. Accordingly, to serve the purpose of the current study focusing on the amount and purpose of L1 use in EFL classrooms, the researchers reviewed related literature for L1 use in L2/EFL contexts below.

### *For L1 use in L2/EFL contexts*

Many researchers (e.g., De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Lin, 2013; Macaro, 2001) for L1 use assert that it serves as a precious cognitive tool that helps students to perceive the concepts and understand the world. L1 use functions as a social tool used to serve the purpose of communication in an L2/EFL classroom, and according to Vygotsky's (1976) sociocultural theory, it plays a potential role in the L2/EFL classrooms. In Vygotsky's view, learning is mediated by cultural

artifacts such as a language. A dialectical relationship exists between the students and the social world such as peers and teachers to serve the purpose of learning. The sociocultural theory also plays the crucial role in the cognitive development during learning a language, or the transformation of elementary mental processes into higher orders (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). According to Vygotskian psycholinguistics, L2 students use L1 as a powerful tool for interacting in the inter-psychological and intra-psychological levels.

Anton and Dicamilla (1999) conducted a study to examine the socio-cognitive function of L1 use in the collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom and the L1 use of English adult students of Spanish at the beginner level was examined. The study was done in a six-week period and the class was held daily for three hours, but the data of three sessions were recorded and analyzed. The class was divided into five pairs, four of which were male-female and the task they were supposed to do was to write an informative piece. The results demonstrated that L1 was used for the purpose of scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development, directing thinking through private speech and also evaluating and understanding the meanings of L2. As their results showed, L1 use had some other functions such as meta-linguistic, cognitive, social, intra-psychological and inter-psychological functions that contribute to it as an important tool in classroom interactions.

Skinner (1985) believed that L1 use facilitates L2 learning as the mere L2 use in the classroom prevents the progress of concept developing in students' mind because it makes the mind disconnected from the formerly developed thoughts and concepts. Therefore, a classroom is a context for co-constructing knowledge from which the shared knowledge can be co-constructed if the students are equipped with both Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interactional Conversation Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 2007). A teacher, as the source of knowledge, encourages an active interaction among the students and provides meaningful activities to reach this aim. The teacher has the authority to control the content and discourse of learning through the act of code-switching, which is a primary non-detachable step in second language interactions. By switching to L1 in L2 or bilingual classrooms, the teacher can simplify his meaning, define or elaborate on the concepts of the course and make the important points comprehensible. L1 must not be excluded from the classroom pedagogy because it is a helpful tool in language learning and the teachers must include code-switching in their class interactions in a non-detrimental way (Macaro, 2001).

Most of the studies on classroom code-switching were conducted in the North American countries, in second language or bilingual classroom contexts (Lin, 2013). Quantitative and functional coding analyses were used to find out the amount of L1 and L2 use in different activities and their functional distribution. The purposes of the studies were to measure whether L1 and L2 were equally used or not. The data were collected through classroom observations, note takings and audio/videotapes. The results suggested the students' preference for using L1 in less formal, more intimate participant structures. In the US, observers with a functional coding system to explain the functional distribution of L1 and L2 conducted some studies in bilingual classrooms (e.g., Flanders, 1970; Guthrie, 1984; Legarreta, 1977; Milk, 1981). To this end, Halliday (1994) stated that code-switching in communications serves for different functional purposes: 1) ideational function which refers to L1 use for the purpose of explaining, defining or exemplifying the academic content for L2 proficient students; 2) textual function that focuses on L1 used for highlighting shifts in the topics or different activity types; and 3) interpersonal function which considers L1 use for negotiating different frames and foots, role-relationships, cultural values and identities. Thus, classroom code-switching studies are not only of micro type but also affective in broader domains such as linguistic ideology and education policy (Lin, 2013).

Another study investigated the effect of code-switching on Chinese students learning English with the same level of proficiency on vocabulary knowledge and their performance on reading an

English text in two different conditions (Macaro, 2009). In the first condition, the teacher provided L1 equivalents for the unknown vocabularies and in the second condition, the teacher paraphrased the terms, but for the third group, a mixture of both equivalents was used. The results indicated that using L1 equivalents was helpful in memorizing the vocabulary for a long term and increased the amount of cognitive processing. Similarly, Miles (2004) carried out two experiments; first, three classes were observed over five months. In this period, the teacher and the students of one class had to use English-only, the students of the other class were permitted to use Japanese, and both the teacher and the students of the third class were supposed to utilize Japanese. In the second experiment, four separate lessons were given to one class; Japanese was used in two of them and was not used in two others. This experiment was conducted at the University of Kent, in England. All Japanese students were male with the age range of 18-19. The findings indicated that L1 use in the classroom could be effective, and is perhaps necessary in certain situations such as eliciting language, checking comprehension, giving instructions and helping students to cooperate. The findings were generally supportive of L1 use in the English classroom, which does not hinder the learning of L2, and L1 use actually facilitates communication, teacher-student relationships and L2 learning and also saves a lot of time in the classroom.

The amount, the purposes, and the reasons for using L1 in the L2 classrooms were investigated by De la Campa and Nassaji (2009). They gathered data through observation and interviews with two English teachers of the German conversation university courses during a 12-week semester and also through stimulated recall sessions. The results showed that both novice and experienced teachers used L1 frequently in their classes as a facilitating tool, but for different reasons and instructional purposes. The teachers used L1 for clarifying their meanings in describing the objectives of the lessons and activities, translating the problematic parts, giving instructions, increasing the students' comprehension level, making the class environment friendlier, and facilitating the learning process. Likewise, numerous facilitative functions for L1 use were identified and reported (Cook, 2001) and the teachers and the students had positive attitudes towards its use. For instance, teachers use L1 to convey meaning, organize classroom, maintain discipline or communicate with individual students, and to build up the bases from which further learning can be processed for peer learning with fellow classmates. L1 is most frequently used for purposes of classroom management, translation and explanation, and for increasing the students' comprehension when talking to individual students in pair or group work (Kraemer, 2006).

L1 use in L2 classrooms is a *subjective issue*, that is to say, the decision over whether or not to use L1 depends on the teachers' or students' view (Edstrom, 2006). Similarly, in a study conducted by Ford (2009) in a university in Japan, 10 teachers were interviewed about the use of L1 in their classrooms. The range of their ideas stretched from English-only policy to the use of L1 whenever needed. The results indicated that although the teachers tried to use English as much as possible, they used L1 consciously to make a friendlier atmosphere in which the students get persuaded to learn and feel relaxed. The teachers also asserted that L1 use decreased the amount of stress and worry in students while they made mistakes in L2.

The findings of studies above theoretically and empirically show that L1 use is helpful in L2/EFL classrooms through managing classrooms, clarifying the course objectives, providing instructions, establishing a friendly environment and negotiating meanings and helping the students to have less anxiety, comprehend better and learn faster. However, an alternative perspective held by some researchers noted in the next section, shows resistance against L1 use in L2/EFL classrooms.

#### *Against L1 use in L2/EFL contexts*

Suffice to say that L1 use facilitates L2/EFL learning in the literature reviewed in the previous section; however, some researchers (e.g., McDonald, 1993; Miles, 2004) still disagree on L1 use in

L2/EFL contexts. This is because they are advocates of English-only policy in a classroom and believe that if students know that the teacher will use L1, then they stop processing information in L2; therefore, students know that the teacher will clarify and explain about anything they wish (e.g., meaning of a new word) in L1. Furthermore, most students know if their L1 can easily be accessed and understood, they stop practicing and communicating in L2 and shift to L1 anytime they wish. Accordingly, the proponents of exclusive L2 use prohibit L1 use since they know that the students do not work hard but simply start thinking in L1 (Ford, 2009). Therefore, they propose that L1 and L2 are two different linguistic phenomena and L2 is learned through maximum exposure.

L1 use must be banned in L2/EFL classrooms from some researchers' perspective as they follow four basic tenets of English-only policy: 1) class must be monolingual; 2) a native speaker is an ideal teacher; 3) English must be learned as early as possible; 4) the standard of English language teaching drops if L1 is used in a classroom (Phillipson, 1992). The notion behind this policy is that the only use of L2 provides the students with the experience of a nearly real L2 context in which they think and communicate in L2 (Macaro, 2001). Therefore, L1 use and code-switching reduce the students' exposure to L2 and lengthen delays in L2 learning in a classroom (Cook, 1991; Macaro, 2001).

Amidst all the debates and controversies that have certainly contributed to the theoretical and methodological sophistication of research on L1 use in L2/EFL classrooms, Macaro (2001) clarifies, totally, three theoretical positions: 1) The *virtual* position in which L1 use is prohibited totally and the classroom is imagined to be the target country where all communications are in L2; 2) the *maximal* position in which no pedagogical value is allocated to L1, but it is believed that a problem-free classroom is impossible. Therefore, in this position, the teachers are allowed to code-switch where they cannot go on through L2; and 3) the *optimal* position in which L1 has a partial pedagogical value and its use improves L2 learning in some situations. The importance of L1 use in L2/EFL classrooms should not be overlooked, on the one hand, and the excessive use of L1 use should be avoided in L2/EFL classrooms, as the main purpose of L2/EFL learning is in question. However, there has recently been a surge of interest in using L1 in L2/EFL studies and the aim of this study is to consider the amount and purpose of L1 use in EFL classrooms. Thus, the research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent do teachers and students use L1 in EFL classrooms?
2. What are teachers' and students' purposes to use L1 in EFL classrooms?

## Method

### *Participants*

The study was conducted in a pre-intermediate 12-week EFL course in Iran, where English language is not spoken out of classroom. The total number of male and female University students was 155 from 10 to 18 in each class with an age range of 19 to 25, registered at varied proficiency levels. Students in these classes were taught listening, speaking, reading and writing activities through the communicative approach based on the teachers' guide. The purpose of attending such a class was to prepare for taking international high-stake exams such as IELTS and TOEFL. Passing the exam provides them with the opportunity to continue their higher education in one of the English speaking countries. Furthermore, six male and female Iranian English language teachers and their students were provided adequate information on the purpose of the study and voluntarily attended a video recording session after the consent forms were gathered. Both

teachers' and students' first language was Persian, which is the formal language of the country. The teachers were from 25 to 30 years of age and proficient in English and had experience in teaching from 4 to 6 years. They had master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and were competent English language teachers. Two sessions of each teacher's class were video-recorded and each session lasted about 90 minutes. Despite following a particular teaching method, they were knowledgeable and flexible enough to use appropriate techniques to meet students' learning needs in the classroom.

### *Instruments*

The materials used for observing the teachers' and students' interactions and capturing L1 use in the EFL classrooms and examining the amounts and purposes of L1 use in EFL classrooms in this study were two SMX-F70 digital camcorders placed one in front of the classroom and the other at the back of the classroom. This is because the two digital camcorders helped to capture any of L2/L1 used by both the teachers and students, so that the researchers would be able to analyse the data in depth to serve the purpose of this study. The SMX-F70 digital camcorder with HD video recording quality allowed us to capture a dynamic video (1080 minutes) in intense sharp detail during 12 sessions. Textbook and workbook used in the classes were New Interchange 2 (Richards, 2002) focusing on four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in English language learning.

### *Data Collection*

Before the researcher (second author) turned the cameras on, she explained about the purpose of video recording of the whole class hour for both the teachers and their students, though they were already provided adequate information on the purpose and process of the data collection in this study. This explanation helped both the teachers and students to feel comfortable to participate in their classroom routines, though the two cameras were planted in the classes to capture their linguistic behaviour. To achieve the aim of this study, the data were collected through 12 video recording sessions. There was neither pressure for exclusive use of the L2 nor for inclusion of the L1 in the classroom syllabi. No quizzes or tests were administered throughout this study. Each teacher's class was recorded two times and each time for about one and a half hours. The class recordings were then transcribed, read several times carefully and coded for instances of the L1 use and then the researchers explored the teachers' and students' purposes for using L1 in the EFL classrooms. The first author checked out the codes to clear out any inconsistency through the coding scheme of L1 utterances provided in Table 1.

### *Data Analysis*

Regarding the research questions, focusing on the amounts and purposes of the L1 use by teachers and students in the EFL classrooms, the video recorded data were carefully watched, transcribed and read carefully for several times. Then, all instances of L1 use were coded according to the advice and coding schemes suggested (Maxwell, 2013) to rearrange data into categories that facilitate comparison between data in the same categories. Responding to the first research question focusing on the amount of the L1 used by teachers and students in the observed classrooms, the word count processor was used for counting the total number of the words spoken during the 12 sessions and then the L1 utterances used in the whole sessions. After that, the numbers of the whole words uttered by the teachers and the students in each session and following that, the numbers of the Persian words used in each session were counted. Finally, after doing some mathematical operations, the percentage of L1 use in each session as well as the total sessions to specify the amount of L1 use was reported. Responding to the second research question focusing on specifying the purposes of the L1 use based on De la Campa and Nassaji's (2009) coding

scheme, all the L1 utterances were identified and categorised under two specific headings: 14 functional categories (Translation, L1-L2 contrast, Evaluation, Activity instruction, Activity objective, Elicitation of student contribution, Personal comments, Comprehension check, Classroom equipment, Administrative issues, Repetition of student L1 utterance, Reaction to student questions, Humours and Teacher as bilingual), definitions and examples (English and Persian equivalents) (see Table 1).

Table 1  
*Coding scheme of L1 utterances*

Functional Categories: Definitions	Examples
1. Translation: L1 utterances that translated a previous L2 utterance.	T: ما میخوایم دو چیز رو مقایسه کیم. مقایسه کردن. [We want to compare two things. To compare.]
2. L1-L2 contrast: L1 utterances used to contrast L2 forms.	T: در فارسی ما چاشت یا ساعت دهی داریم، معادل انگلیسیش چی میشه؟ [In Persian we have breakfast. What is its English equivalent?]
3. Evaluation: L1 utterances used to evaluate students' contributions.	T: خوبه، ادامه بده! [That's right, continue!]
4. Activity instruction: L1 utterances that provided activity instructions.	T: اول جمله ها رو بنویسید بعد بخونید. [First, write your sentences and then, read them aloud.]
5. Activity objective: L1 utterances that described the objective of an activity.	T: هدف از جواب دادن به این سوالات، تقویت قدرت شناوری شماست. [The purpose of answering these questions is to increase your listening ability.]
6. Elicitation of student contribution: L1 utterances that elicited student contributions.	T: سمهی، شما پیرس که این لباسا چقدر قیمت دارند. [Somaye, you ask about the prices of these clothes.]
7. Personal comment: L1 utterances that expressed the teacher's personal take on events.	T: یارد ربطی به اندازه لباس نداره، پس فلا کاری باهاش نداریم. [Yard is not related to cloth size, so we do not work on it now.]
8. Comprehension check: L1 utterances that checked students' comprehension.	T: فهمیدی؟ [Understood?]
9. Classroom equipment: L1 utterances that dealt with classroom equipment.	T: سی دی رو روشن کن. [Play the CD.]
10. Administrative issues: L1 utterances related to administrative issues (e.g., exam announcements).	T: امروز سی ام. یازده روز بعد امتحان دارید. [Today is 30 <sup>th</sup> . Your quiz is 11 days later.]
11. Repetition of student L1 utterance: L1 utterances spoken by a student and repeated by the teacher.	S: تعریف کردن چی میشه؟ [What is the English equivalent for complementing?] T: تعریف کردن؟ [Definition?]

12. Reaction to student question: L1 utterances the teacher produced in response to a student question.

[Complementing?]

T:

واقعاً نمیدونی چی میشه؟

[You really don't know what it means?!]

13. Humour: L1 utterances in which the teacher made a joke intended to make the students laugh.

بچه از یه بلندی داره میفته، اما مادره فقط میگه یا  
حسین، یا ابوالفضل. نمیره بچه رو بگیره!

[The child is falling down from a height but the mother does not take any action; she just looks and shouts!]

14. Teacher as bilingual: instances of code-switching

a) Arbitrary code-mixing: L1 utterances containing instances of the teacher mixing L1 and L2 words randomly, including false starts.

هر وقت یه حرف بی صدا او مدم بعدش یه حرف صدا دار:  
میاد.

b) L1 words from L1 culture: L1 words from L1 cultural context that the teacher incorporated into L2 speech.

[There is always a voiced sound after a voiceless one.]

در ایران، ما قبل از ظهر چاشت میخوریم.

[In Iran, we eat breakfast before noon.]

Note: *S(s)* stands for Student(s) and *T* stands for Teacher.

## Results

The results provided in this section are drawn from a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of classroom video recording transcriptions to respond to the research questions looking into the amounts and the purposes of L1 used by teachers and students in the EFL classrooms.

Research question one: To what extent do teachers and students use L1 in EFL classrooms?

The word count from the video transcriptions showed that the 6 teachers and the students used a total of 76,399 words within 12 sessions (2 sessions for each teacher) in EFL classrooms and used 2,404 L1 utterances, which are 3.14 % of the whole words uttered. Table 2 shows that the minimum and maximum amounts of L1 utterances for 12 sessions were 0.33% and 11.33%, respectively. The total number of utterances spoken by each of the teachers is reported, and the reasons for disparate number of L1 utterances among the teachers might be: 1) the content of the lesson taught during those particular sessions observed, and 2) teachers and students might not have felt the need of L1 use more frequently than other classes. For example, teacher 4 used the highest number of total utterances (Words: 7,459), but used the least amount of L1 utterances (% 0.36) in the first session. In contrast, teacher 5 used the least total number of utterances (Words: 5,582), but used one before the least amount of L1 utterances (% 1.93) in the first session. However, teacher 5 utilized the highest number of total utterances (Words: 7,999), but utilized virtually the least amount of L1 utterances (% 0.86) in the second session. In contrast, teacher 3 utilized the least number of total utterances (Words: 5,069), but utilized moderate amount of L1 utterances (% 2.20) compared with other teachers in the second session. Therefore, responding to the first research question centring on the amount of L1 use in EFL classrooms is varied and depends on the teacher, the content of lesson, and students' learning needs. The second research question noted below dovetails closely between the amount and purposes of L1 in depth in the EFL classrooms.

Table 2  
*Amount of L1 use in the total number of utterances in two sessions*

Teachers	First Session		Second Session	
	Total Utterances	L1 Utterances: %	Total Utterances	L1 Utterances: %
Teacher 1	Words: 7,304	Words: 831 % 11.37	Words: 5,232	Words: 348 % 6.65
Teacher 2	Words: 7,322	Words: 235 % 3.20	Words: 6,524	Words: 184 % 2.82
Teacher 3	Words: 5,738	Words: 196 % 3.41	Words: 5,069	Words: 112 % 2.20
Teacher 4	Words: 7,459	Words: 27 % 0.36	Words: 7,170	Words: 24 % 0.33
Teacher 5	Words: 5,582	Words: 108 % 1.93	Words: 7,999	Words: 69 % 0.86
Teacher 6	Words: 5,697	Words: 168 % 2.94	Words: 5,243	Words: 102 % 1.94
Total	L2 Utterance:	76,399	L1 Utterances: 2,404:	% 3.14
Maximum amount of L1 use		11.37%		
Minimum amount of L1 use		0.33%		

Research question two: What are teachers' and students' purposes to use L1 in EFL classrooms?

In addition to the functions of the L1 use referred to in coding scheme (See Table 1), some other new categories have also emerged in this study after coding the data (See Table 3). Teachers and students used seven additional functional categories through L1 in the EFL classrooms: Teachers used two - encouraging, and giving references, and students used five - asking questions, answering, scaffolding, self-correction and clarification. The findings indicate teachers and students use L1 for a variety of purposes in the EFL classrooms to make the most of teaching and learning. Therefore, the finding of this study has extended De la Campa and Nassaji's (2009) coding scheme to signify other seven additional functions of the L1 (see Table 3) used by the teachers and students. A few examples of the additional functions used in the EFL classrooms are also provided in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Coding scheme of L1 utterances*

Functional Categories: Definitions	Examples
1. Encouraging: Teachers' use of L1 for the sake of encouraging and reinforcing the students.	T: دوباره گوش کن. میتوانی بگو! [Listen again. You can say it!]
2. Giving reference: Using L1 to refer to an external material or a specific part of the book.	T: صفحه ۷۰، قسمت درک شنیداری. [Page 70, listening comprehension section.]
3. Asking question: Students' use of L1 to ask questions.	S: استاد یعنی چی؟ [What does it mean, professor?]
4. Answering: Students' use of L1 to answer the questions.	S: آخرش می شه.... [The final section is....]
5. Scaffolding: Students' use of L1 in group work tasks or in other occasions to help each other.	S: از کدام استفاده کنیم؟ میتونم یا میتوانستم؟ [Which one shall we use? Can or could?] Ss: از میتوانستم. چون زمان گذشته رو نشون میلده. [Could, because it indicates the past tense.]
6. Self-correction: Students' use of L1 for interrupting their own speech and correcting it out.	S: من یه کلاس انگلیسی روز یکشنبه دارم. نه، نه، دوشنبه! [I have an English class on Sunday. No, no, on Monday!]
7. Clarification: Students' asking for more clarification and elaboration on complex and ambiguous issues.	S: میشه بگین په جوره؟ [Can you tell us how it is?] S: میشه سوالتون رو دوباره بگید؟ [Can you repeat your question?]

Note: *S(s)* stands for Student(s) and *T* stands for Teacher.

The purposes or functions used for L1 along with percentages are classified under the two categories of teachers' and students' purposes for L1 use in Table 4. The classification indicates that the teachers used L1 more (16 purposes) than the students (5 purposes) in the EFL classrooms. The findings in this study indicated that teachers and the students used L1 for 21 purposes and teachers frequently used it for translation (20%), elicitation of students' contribution (17%), activity instruction (12%), and L1-L2 contrast (4%) (see Table 4). Teachers used translation most frequently, but L1-L2 comparison the least frequently in EFL classrooms in this study. Students frequently used asking (11%) and answering (7%) questions, clarification (5%), scaffolding (1%) and self-correction (1%). Students used L1 most frequently for asking questions but for self-correction least frequently.

Table 4  
*Purposes of L1 Use*

Teachers' Purposes for L1 Use: %	Students' Purposes for L1 Use: %
1. Translation: 20%	1. Asking question: 11%
2. L1- L2 contrast: 4%	2. Answering: 7%
3. Evaluation: 1%	3. Scaffolding: 1%
4. Activity instruction: 12%	4. Self-correction: 1%
5. Activity objectives: 3%	5. Clarification: 5%
6. Elicitation of students contribution: 17%	
7. Personal comment: 3%	
8. Comprehension check: 2%	
9. Classroom equipment: 1%	
10. Administrative issues: 1%	
11. Repetition of students L1 utterance: 1%	
12. Reaction to students question: 3%	
13. Humour: 1%	
14. Teacher as bilingual: 3%	
15. Encouraging: 2%	
16. Giving reference: 1%	
Total: 75%	Total: 25%

## Discussion

The current study was conducted in a pre-intermediate 12-week English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course in two English language institutes in Iran to examine teachers' and students' amount and purposes of L1 use in six different EFL classes. The results indicated that the average amount of L1 used in the whole classes was about 3.14%, which is not noticeable but signifies that it is still used as an aid in EFL classrooms. The findings of this study are aligned with some earlier research which report 11.3% use of English as L1 in German-as-a-foreign language courses (De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009), and 4.8 % L1 use by the teachers and 2.1 % L1 use by the students in the total lesson and 6.9 % L1 use by the teachers and 3.1 % by the students in the total talk of an L2 classroom (Macaro, 2001). Furthermore, the results revealed the further purposes for L1 use in this study on EFL classrooms despite most of them being similarly reported in the previous studies such as De la Campa and Nassaji (2009), Cook (2001), and Kraemer (2006). However, the current study found two other purposes - encouraging and giving references and five other purposes such as asking questions, answering, scaffolding, self-correction and clarification emerged in teachers' and students' L1 use, respectively. The findings of this study indicated that teachers used L1 for several purposes, which mostly confirm the results obtained from the previous studies noted below.

### *L1 use for ideational purposes*

L1 use has been reported in previous studies on multiple purposes such as conveying (Cook, 2001) and simplifying meaning (Macaro, 2001), defining academic contents (Halliday, 1994), elaborating on the concepts of the course and making the important points comprehensible (Macaro, 2001) and presenting ideational and textual purposes such as translation, explanation, elaboration and exemplification (Lin, 2013). Aligned with these aspects, the finding of the current study confirms that the teachers used L1 for translation (20%) most frequently, and students used minimally L1-L2 contrast (4%) and self-correction (1%), which are the representation of bilingualism. Teachers

used translation as the most frequent tool to facilitate their classroom instruction for the pre-intermediate students, though students could express themselves in English adequately.

#### *L1 use for instructional purposes*

The findings of this study revealed that L1 was used by the teachers for explaining an activity and its objectives (3%), giving reference to special sources (1%) and directing classroom conversation (12%) and the students used L1 for asking (11%) and answering (7%) questions and clarifying the ambiguities (5%). The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of the previous studies which refer to L1 use in the L2 classes for giving instructions, checking comprehension and controlling the students (Macaro, 2001), clarifying the tasks and managing the classroom (Cook, 2001), as well as for clarifying any confusion regarding instructions and saving time (Ford, 2009). However, teaching English in foreign language contexts definitely requires more L1 use for saving time, clarifying confusion, providing instruction and managing classroom in lower proficiency levels due to inadequate English language exposure out of the class. Thus, L1 use functions as a supporting tool for both teachers and students to serve their purposes of teaching and learning respectively in the classroom.

#### *L1 use for interpersonal purposes*

In this study, L1 was used by the teachers for interpersonal purposes such as repetition of the students' L1 utterances (1%), reaction to their questions (3%), elicitation (17%) and evaluation of their behavior (1%), encouraging them (2%), presenting personal comments (3%) and making humor (1%); L1 was also used by the students for achieving inter-subjectivity through scaffolding and peer learning (1%). The finding of this study is aligned with previous studies (Anton & Dicamilla, 1999; Ford, 2009; Lin, 2013), all of which reported the use of L1 for making humor, removing stress, anxiety and pressure and creating a positive friendly environment for inductive learning. Halliday (1994) also referred to the importance of L1 use for negotiating different frames and foots, role-relationships, cultural values and identities. Furthermore, some other functions of L1 use such as maintaining discipline or communicating with the students, building up the bases for further learning and peer learning with fellow classmates were reported (Cook, 2001).

#### *L1 use for practical issues*

Similar to De la Campa and Nassaji's (2009) study, L1 was minimally used in the current study for referring to classroom equipment (1%) and administrative issues (1%). Although this study was conducted in an EFL context where English language is not acknowledged or spoken out of classroom, the small amount of L1 use (3.14%) in the classroom is noticeable for the following potential reasons: 1) A wave of disagreement among EFL teachers to use L1; 2) teachers' unawareness of the L1 support facilitating learning; 3) lack of a treatment focusing on where to use and where not to use L1 in the pedagogy; 4) fear of losing the classroom authority to use L1 (personal communication with some EFL teachers); 5) fear of forming a bad habit for students to use L1 more frequently than English language; 6) fear of losing fame among students, their parents and the school principle board.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study showed that teachers and students used a small amount of L1 in the EFL pre-intermediate classrooms, but it was used wherever they thought it was needed. That is, although L1 was minimally used, there was no reluctance for its use where it was necessary. The various functions of L1 use also showed that the teachers and the students used L1 as a facilitative tool for

achieving a wide range of their purposes. Thus, L1 can be used and actually should be used as an aid by the teachers to convey meaning, manage the classroom, make a friendly environment, reduce the students' anxiety, facilitate communication, elaborate on the course objectives and clarify the ambiguous points in the pre-intermediate level. The students are also allowed to use their L1 for scaffolding and peer learning, but they must not use it more frequently to overshadow their L1 exposure to L2/EFL, which makes them lazy, and interferes with their L2/EFL learning. L1 should be used in a way that students can rely on it to build up their L2/EFL knowledge. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students' L1 is an effective tool for improving and facilitating L2/EFL learning and teaching processes in the pre-intermediate levels. This study had the limitation of considering the video-recorded observations in an EFL context without interviewing the teachers and students to respond to the two research questions. Future research should focus on interviewing the teachers and students and match what is observed with what teachers and students believe through interviews and treatment of how often L1 should be used. Thus, L1 use is needed in elementary and pre-intermediate levels and should be included practically in the L2/EFL classroom syllabi, as students are not adequately mature in the target language and might miss some important points in the classroom interactions. Therefore, teachers and school principle board should be aware of the importance of L1 in learning, in general, and the L2/EFL teaching in the elementary and pre-intermediate levels, in particular.

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